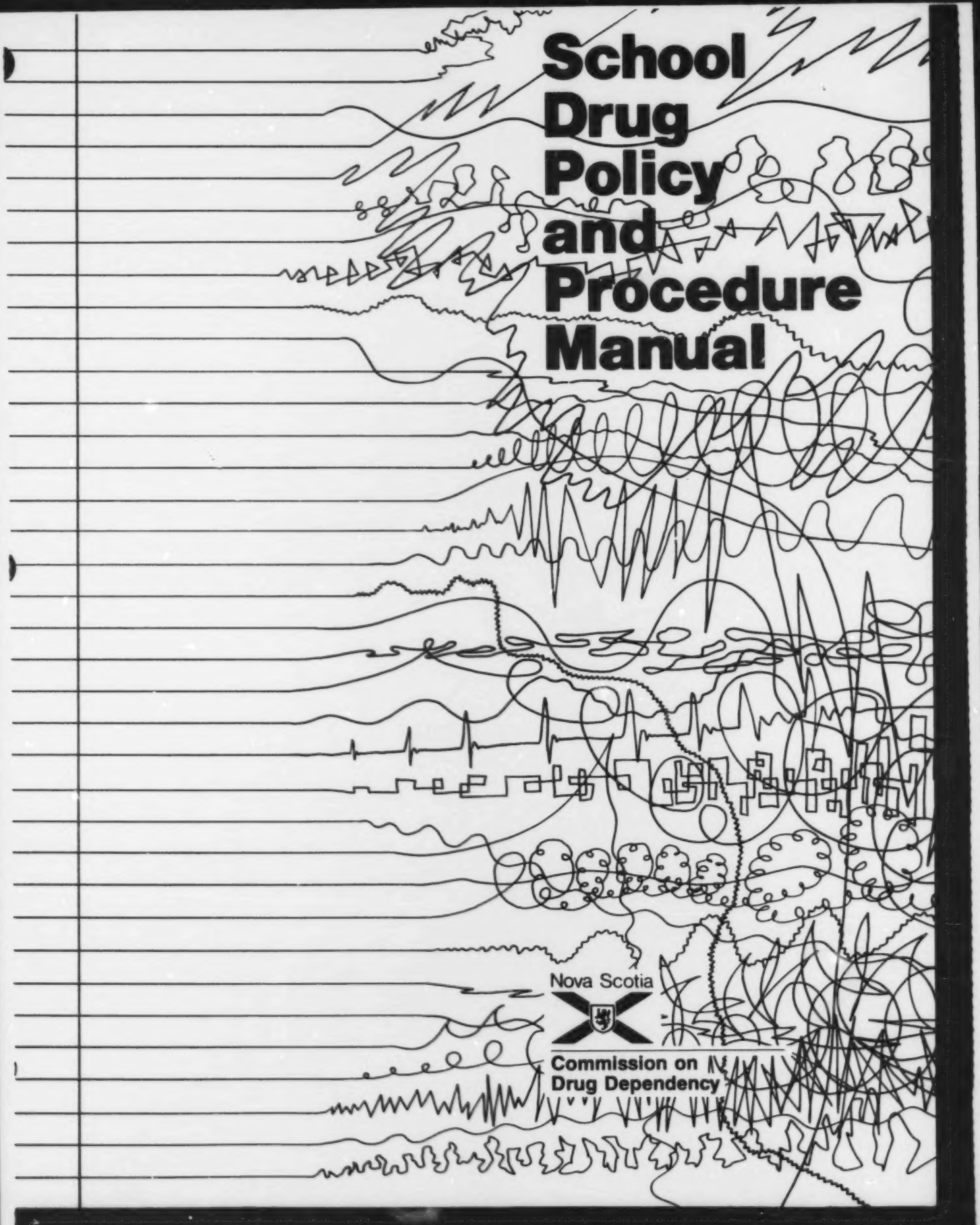
School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual



Nova Scotia

Commission on Drug Dependency

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

Contents

Preface
Introduction
Acknowledgements

Policy Guidelines

Strategies for School Professionals

Student Assistance Process

Reference

Appendix

91-01161/

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

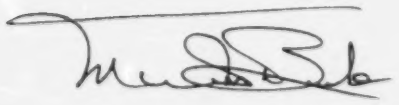
Preface

Schools recognize the problems their students are facing with alcohol and other drugs. School personnel, administrators and board members share the concern of parents, community members and agencies regarding drug-related problems among young people.

The school is a focal point in the community. This does not mean, however, that the drug problem is to be solved by the school alone. With involvement of parents and community in school efforts, drug prevention and intervention policies can be developed with a community-based, multi-faceted approach.

The Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency's School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual outlines a series of guidelines for policy development and integration of preventive drug education and intervention strategies into the school community, within the existing curriculum and using existing resource personnel. A Student Assistance Process model is included which utilizes community and school resources.

Those who share concern over the drug problem among young people can be united in effective action. Development of supportive school drug policy and practical strategies for implementation of a helping process designed for the student is effective action. There must be unity in supportive effort to solve the problem together.



Marvin M. Burke, R.S.W.
Executive Director
Nova Scotia Commission
on Drug Dependency

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

Introduction

Drug use and abuse continue to be problems among school-aged young people. In order to help school boards develop strategies for dealing with these problems, the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency has developed a series of guidelines for integrating prevention and intervention strategies into the school community.

There are three components to this manual. The first, entitled *Policy Guidelines*, contains development and implementation strategies for drug prevention and intervention policy. The second component, *Strategies for School Professionals*, provides educators with concrete suggestions for implementing school policy on alcohol and other drugs. The third section is a *Student Assistance Process Model*. The model presented can provide guidance for school officials who wish to create a Student Assistance Process.

The manual is not intended to specify policy. Rather, it is an effort to provide school professionals with suggestions for planning effective strategies and services to meet the changing needs of today's youth. Schools that already have drug prevention and intervention strategies in place may find this manual useful in helping teachers and other professionals implement school policy. Other districts which are considering a review of their present policy will hopefully find these guidelines helpful.

The guidelines in this manual are based on the assumption that the school can be a focal point in the greater community. Schools can develop policies that utilize local community resources such as police officers, health workers, local addiction and drug counselling agencies, as well as teaching faculty, students, school staff and parents.

The advantages of a community-based, multi-faceted approach are:

Students will benefit by having access to community resources; also understanding that the school has the support of the local community and is working closely with the community in implementing prevention and intervention strategies may deter students from taking advantage of a confusing situation.

Teachers will feel more confident if they know they have the backing of their school board, other teachers, parents and community workers in their endeavours to help students with drug-related problems. They will also feel more confident if they know to whom within the community they can turn for help.

School staff such as cafeteria workers, bus drivers and custodial supervisors will know that they have the support of the school if they uncover evidence of a drug problem that requires attention.

Parents will feel confident that their children are receiving the help they need and, most importantly, that they are a part of the helping process.

Community workers will benefit from the knowledge that schools are working with them to provide assistance for students troubled by drugs in their daily lives.

Police officers will have the opportunity to redefine their role within the community as prevention officers as well as enforcement officers.

Cost savings may result from a community-based, multi-faceted approach. Such an approach need not require additional staff or resources; rather, it involves setting in motion prevention and intervention strategies using existing resources and personnel.

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

It is hoped that the information provided in this manual will:

Outline procedures for school boards to consider when developing or reviewing policy related to substance abuse.

Place equal emphasis on prevention and intervention strategies so that school personnel are supported in action before a crisis situation occurs.

Provide clear guidelines for teachers, guidance counsellors, vice principals and principals for identification, assessment and referral processes.

Encourage school personnel to consider therapeutic/rehabilitative treatment as well as punitive action for students involved in drug use.

Outline the legal responsibilities of teachers and determine when the justice system should become involved.

Ensure the proper involvement of parents or guardians, community workers and police officers.

Enable students to be aware of and have access to a process which will assist them should they experience difficulty with alcohol or other drugs.

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

Acknowledgements

©Copyright 1989
Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency

Author
Alexandra Thompson, M.A.

Design
GDA, Halifax

Project Coordinator
Nancy Comeau, M.Ed.
Education Officer
Nova Scotia Commission on
Drug Dependency

Project Assistant
Peggy Duncan, M.Ed.
Education Officer
N.S.C.O.D.D.

The Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency wishes to acknowledge the funding made available through the Community Action Program — Drug Strategies, by the Health Promotions Directorate — Health and Welfare Canada

Gratitude is expressed for contribution given by Brian Wilbur, M.Ed., Coordinator, Prevention and Community Education Division, N.S.C.O.D.D., the Nova Scotia School Board Association, and Eric Durnford, Q.C., McInnes Cooper & Robertson

"The views expressed herein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official policy of the Department of National Health and Welfare."

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data
Thompson, Alexandra, 1948-
School drug policy and procedure manual

ISBN 0-88871-093-3

1. *Drug abuse — Prevention — Study and teaching (Secondary).* 2. *Community and school.* I. *Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency.* II. *Title.*

HV5840.C32N6 1989 362.2'9386 C89-099704-7

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

Policy Guidelines

Contents

1.0 Introduction *1*

2.0 Policy Development and Review Committee *1*

3.0 Implementation of Drug Prevention and Intervention Policy *2*

3.1 Teacher Education *2*

3.2 Student Drug Education *2*

3.3 Parent Support *3*

3.4 Community Support *3*

4.0 Effective Drug Prevention and Intervention Policy *4*

5.0 Education and Prevention Policy Considerations *5*

6.0 Early Intervention Policy Considerations *6*

7.0 Referral and Treatment Policy Considerations *7*

8.0 Discipline Policy Considerations *8*

9.0 Follow up and Re-entry Policy Considerations *10*

10.0 Appendix: Legal Guidelines *11*

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

1.0 Introduction

These policy guidelines have been established to provide school boards with information and suggestions for establishing school-based prevention and intervention strategies using local resources and personnel. Each school board should consider those aspects of the guidelines that meet their individual needs so that community resources may be utilized effectively without incurring the costs involved in additional programs or staff.

2.0 Policy Development and Review Committee

School boards should establish a Policy Development and Review Committee to develop prevention and intervention policy and to provide on-going policy review. The Committee should include representatives from the following groups: the school board; the teaching faculty; school administrators; student bodies; parents or guardians; and community resource personnel, such as community workers, drug education coordinators, and child psychologists, etc.

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

3.0 Implementation of Drug Prevention and Intervention Policy

Drug policy can be implemented through the following four strategies:

3.1 Teacher Education

Familiarity with School Board Policy. Teachers and other school personnel who are concerned with the overall well being of students should be familiar with the school's policy. School officials may be encouraged to hold seminars to introduce faculty members to prevention and intervention policy.

Skills Development. Teachers and other school personnel should have an opportunity to develop skills in conducting drug education programs. They can also be trained to recognize the signs that a student is becoming, or already is, involved with drugs, or that a student is being adversely affected by the drug use of someone he or she cares about. In-service programs for staff members are essential.

3.2 Student Drug Education

Drug Education Programs. A research review indicates that those programs which combine drug information with life skills training proved to be the most effective. Programs which also address school environmental conditions, or which have the support of the community, are more likely to be successful.[1]

Multidisciplinary Drug Education. The more ways that students receive consistent information about drugs, the greater the impact of the message. Prevention policy should encourage teachers to introduce drug education in subject areas in which drugs are not discussed on a regular basis. School boards may also suggest supp'emental drug education through presentations by community and school groups as part of a preventive drug education policy. School activities which encourage and support a drug-free lifestyle deserve both recognition and assistance in these continued efforts.

1 Based on *Toward the Prevention and Intervention of Drug Problems: A Program for Teachers*, made available by the Division of Education & Prevention, Alcohol & Drug Dependency Commission, St. John's, Nfld.

Self Esteem. Drug-related problems are often linked to feelings of inadequacy and lack of self worth. Communication is an important governing factor in helping a student determine a positive self image. Students who are able to think freely, express their feelings openly with their peers, and discuss issues of personal concern with their teachers in an atmosphere of empathy and understanding are more likely to develop a good sense of self worth.

Therefore, school policy should aim to foster open communications within the school and provide support for teachers who wish to encourage the growth of a positive self concept.

Peer Influence. Involving the student body in preventive strategies is important. This may be accomplished by including student groups in the implementation of preventive strategies and by providing opportunities for student groups to meet with trained facilitators to discuss their mutual concerns about drugs.

3.3 Parent Support

Parental Drug Education. Parents or guardians are more likely to be responsive to drug intervention policies implemented within the school system if they are involved in preventive strategies as well. Parents should be informed about school policy on alcohol and drug use and aware of the importance of their involvement if these policies are to be effective.

3.4 Community Support

The School within the Community. The school is often a focal point in the local community, acting not only as an agent for educating young people but also as a community centre. For strategies to be effective they must be supported by the community, not just by the school board and teaching staff. School policy should be clearly enunciated to all concerned.

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

4.0 Effective Drug Prevention and Intervention Policy

When establishing school policy, the Policy Development and Review Committee should consider the following steps:

☐ **Education and Prevention.** Review existing school drug education programs for all grade levels and community resources, and consider how they may be used effectively.

☐ **Early Intervention.** Educators can recognize the early warning signs that a student is experiencing drug-related problems and take appropriate action. For further information, refer to the *Student Assistance Process* manual.

☐ **Referral and Treatment.** Become aware of treatment programs and facilities available for students needing assistance, and consider how these programs may be used effectively in individual cases.

☐ **Discipline.** Evaluate disciplinary procedures in place for dealing with students who repeatedly abuse the school's policy on drug use and consider how these procedures may be integrated with counselling or treatment efforts.

☐ **Follow up and Re-Entry.** Establish procedure for the re-entry of a student following treatment. What provisions are in place for follow up treatment, for enabling the student to make up for missed school work, and for introducing the student to alternative activities and peer groups?

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

5.0 Education and Prevention Policy Considerations

The more ways that students receive the message that they do not need to include drugs in their lives, the better informed they will be when making decisions about drug use or non use.

The following questions can serve as guidelines for the development of Education and Prevention Policy.

☐ Are teachers encouraged to consider ways of integrating drug education into the curriculum?

☐ Are teachers supplied with accurate and current drug education materials appropriate for the various grade levels?

☐ Are teachers informed about the means of supplementing drug education with classes conducted by personnel from outside agencies?

☐ Are teachers and school personnel encouraged to provide alternative activities for students which include drug education?

☐ Does the school keep the community informed about its drug policy? Those who should be aware of the school's policy include parents or guardians, community workers, resource personnel, police, and social workers.

For further suggestions on developing Education and Prevention Policy, refer to the "Prevention Through Education" section of the *Strategies for School Professionals* manual.

6.0 Early Intervention Policy Considerations

The following questions can serve as guidelines for the development of Early Intervention Policy.

☐ Are teachers trained to detect possible drug-related problems in the early stages? All schools should be encouraged to provide in-service workshops on this subject.

☐ Is there a teacher on staff trained to deal with students exhibiting possible problems?

☐ Is the atmosphere conducive for discussion of drug use and related issues? Schools should be encouraged to provide opportunities for students troubled by drugs in their daily lives to meet with their peers and trained facilitators to discuss their concerns. School personnel should be aware that there may be a need for two groups; one for students who are being affected by personal use of drugs or use of drugs by friends, and one for students who are troubled by drug abuse by one or more family members.

☐ Are referral systems for additional counselling or therapy in place for the student whose problems with drugs cannot be worked out on a one-to-one basis with the teacher? Some school boards may prefer to recommend referral processes based on the Student Assistance Process. For further information, refer to the *Student Assistance Process* manual.

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

7.0 Referral and Treatment Policy Consideratons

The following questions can serve as guidelines for the development of Referral and Treatment Policy.

☐ Are students with drug-related problems referred by the classroom teacher to a counsellor or student assessment team?

☐ Are procedures in place for the counsellor or assessment team, in consultation with the student, the student's subject teachers, and the student's parents/guardians (if possible) to consider forms of treatment best suited to meet the student's needs?

☐ Are counsellors or assessment teams aware of the available treatment options, such as supplemental drug education programs, drug counselling programs with external agencies, or compulsory drug rehabilitation?

☐ Are school boards aware of the treatment and counselling facilities available in their communities?

☐ Have school boards contacted these community agencies to determine what programs are already in place, how students in need of treatment or counselling may be referred to these programs, and whether agency personnel are able and willing to advise on formulating district school policy?

☐ Does school policy on counselling and treatment programs include provisions for dealing with students who miss classes to attend rehabilitative sessions? School boards may wish to consider that classes or assignments missed as a result of counselling or treatment be recorded as time lost due to illness in order to protect the student's right to privacy.

☐ Has the school board considered how many students may be referred to counselling or treatment programs?

8.0 Discipline Policy Considerations

The following questions can serve as guidelines for the development of Discipline Policy.

☐ Are the school's disciplinary procedures for students supportive of the school's policy on alcohol and drugs?

☐ Does policy address disciplinary procedures for the first, second and subsequent offenses within a school year for the following infractions:
- ☐ USE of tobacco products on school premises.
- ☐ USE of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs.
- ☐ INTOXICATION by alcohol or other non-prescribed drugs.
- ☐ POSSESSION of alcohol on school premises.
- ☐ POSSESSION of illicit drugs on school premises.
- ☐ SUPPLYING or TRAFFICKING in alcohol or illicit drugs.

This policy should be established with the cooperation of the appropriate counselling and legal consultants.

☐ Has the Policy Development and Review Committee considered policy on field and athletic trips? Guidelines are provided by the Nova Scotia Athletic Association.

☐ Has the school board issued a written policy statement on the use of alcohol, tobacco products and non-prescribed drugs at school events, for students arriving at school under the influence of a non-prescribed product, or for students who use a non-prescribed product while on a school-sponsored trip?

☐ Are the consequences of infringement clear and concise?

☐ Are disciplinary procedures linked to procedures for constructive action, such as counselling or referral to community addiction services? There is a danger that without follow up, disciplinary measures may not be effective.

☐ Are the methods and procedures for discipline within legal bounds?

☐ Is policy on discipline in accordance with the provisions laid out in the Education Act of Nova Scotia regarding suspension and expulsion of students, and the rights of students to appeal? Boards should be aware of provincial and federal laws of Canada when enacting discipline policy for students in contravention of laws regulating the use of alcohol, drugs or narcotics, particularly when the police have been called or when it has been necessary to forcibly restrain a student. Additional information on the legal rights of school boards in setting policy is contained in the Appendix. However, boards should seek legal advice.

☐ Does school policy include provisions for informing the parents/guardians of any student who has breached the school's policy on alcohol and other drugs?

☐ Does school policy have provisions for requesting the assistance of the police in an advisory capacity or to act in a situation beyond the control or legal jurisdiction of school officials?

School personnel should be aware of when police assistance may be requested and when it *must* be sought (as in cases of trafficking or supplying alcohol or illicit drugs). School boards may want to encourage school administrators to determine the name of the local community police officer and to develop a rapport with the officer. It will be much easier for a school to deal with a situation in which the police are involved if prior contact under less stressful circumstances has been made. The community officer should be viewed as a resource person able to assist the school in implementing intervention strategies.

☐ Does the school board encourage workshops or seminars for school personnel on implementation procedures?

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

9.0 Follow Up and Re-Entry Policy Considerations

The following questions can serve as guidelines for the development of Follow up and Re-entry Policy.

☐ Does school policy take into account the needs of the student who is re-entering the school system after being absent to attend counselling or treatment programs, or dismissed because of disciplinary measures?

School board policy should take into account the difficulties, both real and perceived, that these students face. Unless provisions are made to help the student through the re-adjustment stage, there remains the danger that the student will return to his or her former lifestyle.

Does school policy take into account the following provisions:

☐ Additional counselling or treatment sessions, as needed?

☐ Opportunities for the young person to join student support groups with others troubled by drugs in their lives to discuss their concerns under the direction of a trained facilitator?

☐ Resources to help students make adjustments to their social and academic school lives?

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

10.0 Appendix: Legal Guidelines

It is extremely difficult for school personnel to be fully informed about the legal ramifications of intervening with students involved in substance abuse. Recent court challenges using the Charter of Rights, recent changes to the Criminal Code of Canada, and the Young Offenders' Act make it difficult for teachers and other school personnel to determine what action they may take within legal bounds.

In establishing disciplinary procedures for students involved in substance abuse, school boards should consider the following areas:

Laying on of Hands. Under the Criminal Code of Canada, any teacher, parent, or person standing in place of a parent "is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances." (Section 43)

Such force is legally sanctioned, however, only when used for the benefit of the education of the child. School personnel overstepping that boundary may be liable to a charge of criminal assault. Assault is broadly defined as: "A person commits an assault when, without the consent of another person, he applies force intentionally to that other person, directly or indirectly." (Section 244)

Liquor Offences. It is illegal under the law of Nova Scotia to provide liquor to minors (aged under nineteen), or to drink or to appear intoxicated in a public place. For the purposes of this Act, a school or school premises is considered to be a public place.

Possession of Alcohol. Possession of alcohol by students under nineteen years of age, of illegal drugs, or of prescription drugs not prescribed by a physician for the medical use of the individual is an offense.

Possession of Drugs. "A person has anything in "possession" when he has it in his personal possession or knowingly (i) has it in the actual possession or custody of another person, or (ii) has it in any place, whether or not that place belongs to or is occupied by him, for the use or benefit of himself or of another person." (Criminal Code of Canada, Section 3(4).)

Trafficking. Selling illegal drugs is an offense under the Narcotics Control Act which is a federal law. School officials must inform the police when a student is accused of trafficking.

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

Young Offenders Act. This Act protects the privacy of young people and specifically prohibits the publication by any means of any report of an offense committed, or alleged to have been committed, by a young person (aged under eighteen) without judicial authorization. The Act further prohibits the publication of information that could lead to the identification of a child or young person who may have committed, or even have witnessed, an offense.

The Act also requires the notification of parents or guardians whenever a young person is arrested or detained in custody. While responsibility for such notification is placed on the police officer in charge at the time of detention, school personnel who have contacted the police are advised to make every attempt to notify a parent or guardian.

Suspension/Expulsion. School boards have the right to empower school principals or any person in charge of a school to suspend a student in violation of school policy on alcohol and other drugs for a period of up to five days, provided the pupil, his/her teachers, and his/her parents or guardians are notified in writing. The school board may also extend that suspension to include all remaining school days in the current school year if such action is deemed in the best interests of the student, other students, or other members of the school. In such cases, however, the student or the student's parents have the right of appeal and this must be made clear whenever an expulsion order is sanctioned by the board.

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

Strategies for School Professionals

Contents

1.0 Introduction *1*

2.0 Prevention Through Education *3*

2.1 Getting the Message Out *3*

2.2 Reviewing the Curriculum *3*

2.3 Supplemental Drug Education Classes *4*

2.4 Alternatives to Drug Use *5*

2.5 Involving the Greater Community *6*

3.0 Intervention Strategies *7*

3.1 Early Intervention: Knowing When to Intervene *7*

3.2 Intervention Strategies *9*

3.2.1 Assessing the Problem *9*

3.2.2 Referral and Treatment Programs *9*

3.2.3 Discipline *13*

3.2.4 Follow up and Re-Entry into the School System *16*

3.2.5 Tips for Educators *19*

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

1.0 Introduction

Strategies for School Professionals provides school professionals with strategy guidelines for assisting students affected by drugs.

Teachers and other school personnel are often in the front line of a school's efforts to control drug use by its students. It is usually the classroom or subject teacher who may first detect that a student is experiencing drug-related problems that are affecting his or her everyday life. These problems may be of a personal nature or they may be the result of drug abuse in the family. Knowing that procedures are in place for intervention provides the teacher with confidence to take action before a suspected drug problem becomes unmanageable. However, in order to be effective, the teacher confronted with a drug-related problem in the classroom must be aware of the school's policy on prevention and intervention, know what action to take, and have support for the action taken.

The manual is divided into two main parts. The first offers constructive suggestions for introducing *preventive drug education* into the curriculum. The second part provides suggestions for implementing *early intervention strategies*, referring a student for drug counselling or treatment programs, administering discipline, and for assisting the student's re-entry into the school system.

Areas included are:

Prevention Through Education. Effective drug education, particularly starting at the elementary level, is one of the most important means of preventing drug use among young people. Content should be both factual and effective, and should include such issues as decision-making, peer influence and alternatives to drug use.

Early Intervention. Early intervention means being aware of the signs and symptoms of a student experiencing problems that may be drug-related (either his or her own use, or abuse by a close friend or family member), and knowing what action to take.

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

Referral and Treatment. Many students whose academic progress is being affected by drug use, either their own or by someone they care about, will benefit from treatment or counselling programs, or a student support group. This manual will suggest a process that can be implemented within the school and will suggest referral procedures for more difficult cases.

Discipline. There will be cases where disciplinary measures are necessary. Discipline could be combined with follow ups such as compulsory treatment, counselling, or student support group attendance.

Follow up and Re-Entry. Students who have been removed from the regular school system, whether for a long period of time or on a per session basis, will need assistance in re-entering normal school life. Assistance may range from providing extra help for missed school work to providing suggestions for entering new peer relationships and finding alternative extra-curricular activities.

2.0 Prevention Through Education

2.1 Getting the Message Out

Drug education, particularly starting at the elementary level, is one of the most effective methods of preventing drug use among students, especially if this education is combined with discussion of life skills. Teaching professionals should remember that students are receiving conflicting messages outside the classroom. They know that some drugs, specifically tobacco, alcohol and caffeine, are considered to be socially acceptable by some adults. Letting students know that drugs can interfere with their academic success and with their general enjoyment of life, and that they shouldn't have to use drugs to be accepted by their peers, is an important message. The more ways that students receive this message, the greater the impact.

2.2 Reviewing The Curriculum

While schools do offer drug education, usually as part of the health education curriculum, it is possible for teachers to integrate drug education with other subjects.

There are several areas in which drug education can be integrated with regular classroom instruction at all grade levels. The following points provide some suggestions but teachers are encouraged to adapt drug education to their particular courses and methods of teaching. In the early grades, teachers should consider introducing some drug education, such as reminding children never to take any drug unless supervised by an adult and to report any drugs offered to them to a trusted adult. However, in the upper elementary school and through junior and senior high, teachers should be encouraged to consider means of introducing drug education into regular subjects and to combine this education with the decision-making skills that students are acquiring.

Art Education. Art, at the elementary school level, is often taught by the classroom teacher. These periods provide opportunities for students to create projects dealing with the social impact or hazards of alcohol or tobacco products.

Personal Development and Relationships. Encourage teachers to use alcohol and other drugs as the focus of classes in the Personal Development and Relationships curriculum.

Health. Teaching students the facts about drugs is important. It addition, drug education should encourage students to make wise personal decisions about their intended use or non-use of drugs. Health classes which focus on problem-solving or decision-making skills provide teachers with excellent opportunities to introduce drug-related issues.

Science. Sciences classes provide opportunities to investigate some of the properties of better known drugs, such as tobacco products, caffeine, or alcohol, and to learn how these drugs affect internal organs. Science classes can also include lessons on some of the characteristics of drugs.

Industrial Arts and Home Economics. While all students are taught safety rules when using equipment, teachers could use these classes to explain to students some of the dangers of operating equipment while under the influence of drugs. They should also consider providing opportunities for students to discuss the possible effect of drugs on their lives in other life skills classes.

Special Education. Drug education could be considered as the focus of topics for discussion in special education classes.

2.3 Supplemental Drug Education Classes

While there are numerous ways of supplementing drug education with classes conducted by personnel from outside agencies, teachers should be aware that these methods should not be used in place of their drug education classes. In addition, teachers should be aware of their responsibilities to prepare students for supplementary classes with pre-sessions and to follow up discussion with post-sessions.

Community resource personnel or representatives from a self help group are usually pleased to be invited to be a part of the drug education. Police officers may also be approached to make presentations through the divisional headquarters. For example, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have a program entitled *P.A.C.E.* (Police Assisting Community Education) which combines drug information with decision-making skills.

Teachers may also want to consider inviting peer drug educators to speak to their classes. These educators are senior high school students who have received instruction on presenting selected lessons on drug education to junior high students through the *Choosing About Using* program, published by the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency. Peer educators are volunteers who are trained to speak to pre-selected classes and the lessons they teach are on alcohol and other drugs, decision-making and finding alternatives to drug use. Teachers interested in learning more about peer drug education should contact the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency. Peer educators are particularly effective at the junior high level where students are readily influenced by their peers and may be more likely to accept information from peer educators than from other professionals.

2.4 Alternatives to Drug Use

Teachers and other school personnel may wish to encourage student activities which provide drug education. Suggestions include:

Organizing presentations or sponsoring poster or display booth contests during Drug Awareness Week;

Organizing drug-free celebrations;

Providing opportunities for a student support group operating under the guidance of a trained facilitator. There may be a need to encourage the organization of two groups: one for students troubled by their own drug use or drug use by their friends; and one for students troubled by drug abuse by one or more family members.

While providing drug education within the regular curriculum offers students a greater awareness of issues relating to drug use, students should also be encouraged to join other activities outside the classroom that offer alternatives to drug use. These activities can be divided into three main areas, namely:

Extra-curricular activities within the school. These include sports teams, school clubs, attending social events, etc.

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

Extra-curricular activities within the community, such as scouts, church groups, community sports teams, etc. Youth leaders may be willing to speak to students about some of the activities their groups offer young people.

Extra-curricular activities within the family. While the school has no control over the family life of students, teachers can encourage students to take part, or even to suggest, family activities. Junior and senior high school students often do not consider family activities in their daily plans.

2.5 Involving the Greater Community

For drug education to be effective, schools need to involve the entire community — community workers, resource personnel, the police, social workers, and, very importantly, parents and guardians. Community resource personnel and local police officers should be contacted and informed of the school's policy on prevention and intervention strategies.

The involvement of parents or guardians is equally important. If parents/guardians become aware of the extent of the drug problem in their community, the drug education their children are receiving, and any student assistance process in effect, they are more likely to be supportive of school efforts.

School personnel may also want to consider means of relaying to parents the importance of supplementing the drug education their children are receiving in class. Parents should be encouraged to be open with their children and to discuss drugs with them. Seminars or workshops can be arranged for parents who feel they do not know enough about drugs or how to communicate with their children about this important issue. One such resource is *Smooth Sailing*, a drug education program for parents which is available through the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency.

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

3.0 Intervention Strategies

Primary preventive efforts should be supplemented with intervention strategies. Intervention is:

Recognizing the signals that a student is experiencing personal problems that are interfering with his or her academic progress;

Opening discussion with the student to see if the problem can be easily resolved;

Having in place referral procedures to help the individual if the problem is more difficult to resolve;

Providing the student with the clear-cut consequences of abusing the school's policy on alcohol and other drugs; and

Setting in motion options for helping the student who has received drug counselling or treatment re-adjust to school life.

In-service training permits teachers as well as guidance counsellors and other administrative staff to be sensitive to the signals that a student is experiencing problems. Foremost, the problem must be recognized. Secondly, intervention with a student who is believed to be having difficulties that may be drug-related involves understanding. Administrative support is essential for action.

3.1 Early Intervention: Knowing when to Intervene

Signs and symptoms of trouble can fall into three categories. (Care should be taken since some of these behavioral patterns *may* indicate problems that are not drug-related, such as a physical disorder or emotional upset.)

Academic Changes:
— grades declining
— work handed in late, incomplete
— sloppy work habits
— tendency toward perfection (sometimes evident in the behaviour of children affected by drug abuse in the home).

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

Behavioral Changes: Noted changes in normal behaviour patterns expected for the student, including:
—depression
—elation
—mood swings
—frequent requests to leave the classroom
—tendency to shun former friends or marked changes in peer groups
—reluctance to take part in school activities
—abusive language or actions, whether directed toward the teacher or other students
—lying, cheating, or stealing.

Physical Changes:
—inattention to personal hygiene
—slurred speech
—lack of coordination
—lethargy or hyperactive behaviour
—complaints of illnesses (real or imagined)
—odour of alcohol or marijuana about the body.

An effective intervener will note behaviour patterns, speak with the student with empathy and understanding in order to try to determine the root of the problem, and discuss possible changes in attitude. The intervener should consider gathering information from other teachers about changes in the student's behaviour patterns and approaching the vice principal or guidance counsellor for referral to an assessment team. For more information, refer to the *Student Assistance Process* manual.

Children whose problems lie within drug abuse in the family need special consideration. They should be encouraged to seek counselling tailored to meet their needs and, if possible, should be given the opportunity to meet in a support group with others experiencing similar problems. Trained facilitators are necessary to enable these children to deal with a troubled home life and to reassert their self confidence.

The student who is personally involved with drugs and who makes little effort to relieve the situation, or who tries and is unable to correct the problem after a reasonable length of time, should be encouraged to seek help from another source, such as the principal, vice principal, guidance counsellor or member of an assessment team. Some students may deny they are involved with drugs even when the evidence is to the contrary. Since such students are unlikely to seek help voluntarily, educators should consider consulting one or more of the sources listed above.

3.2 Intervention Strategies

When a student has been reported to the school administration for having a drug-related problem that cannot be easily resolved, the school has several options open.

3.2.1 Assessing the Problem

Primarily, assessing the problem involves meeting with the student, his or her parents or guardians, subject teachers and one or more individuals assigned by the school to help in the assessment process.

The objectives are:

—to decide on the nature of the student's problem. It may be personal drug use or abuse, concern about friends' use of drugs, problems related to drug abuse in the family, or disciplinary problems related to drug use.

—to decide on the best course of treatment for the student. Treatment may involve encouragement to join a student support group, compulsory drug counselling, referral to the school psychologist for assessment and counselling, or removal from classes or from school to attend rehabilitative programs. These treatment processes may, or may not, be combined with disciplinary measures, depending on whether or not the school deems that some punitive action is necessary.

In some schools the guidance counsellor, vice principal or resource teacher may interview the student in the first instance to assess the problem and determine the best course of treatment. Other schools may elect to put in place student assessment teams to determine the best means of helping the student. Further information on the suggested composition of such assessment teams, their terms of reference and responsibilities are outlined in the *Student Assistance Process* section of this manual.

3.2.2 Referral and Treatment Programs

Assessment of each individual case, as outlined in the *Student Assistance Process*, will enable assessors to determine the best course of treatment for each student. School professionals should be aware of the various types of treatment and counselling programs that are available both within the school and the local community.

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

School Drug Counselling

Students whose drug use is affecting their school performance may be required to attend counselling sessions within the school. Students who use drugs infrequently but to the extent that drugs interfere with their school work may be required to attend resource centre or study skills sessions to improve their academic standing while undertaking to abstain from further drug use. Students whose drug use is seriously affecting both their academic progress and their social development may be referred for assessment by the school district psychologist. They may then be referred to compulsory group or individual counselling with the psychologist or a drug education counsellor provided through the school board.

These counselling sessions may take place after school, but they may also have to be arranged during school hours. Where possible, sessions occurring during school are staggered with the help of subject teachers so that no student misses the same subject each session. However, it is an important part of the rehabilitation process that students realize they are responsible for work missed while attending counselling.

Removal from the School for Rehabilitation

Students with more serious drug problems may have to be removed from the school to attend rehabilitation centres for several hours a week or for several weeks at a time.

These students will require special assistance on their return to school and teachers may be called upon to provide extra help sessions or to arrange for a student tutor. As with students removed from class to attend school-based counselling sessions, these students should also realize they are ultimately responsible for work missed while attending a rehabilitation centre if they wish to continue their schooling.

Student Support Groups
Opportunities for students with like concerns to meet under the guidance of a trained facilitator have already been suggested. Schools interested in providing such an opportunity for students should be reminded of the need to provide separate options for students who use or have used drugs in their daily lives, and for students who are concerned about drug abuse in the family.

These options may be arranged during noon hour or after school. The groups are usually organized at the beginning of the school year and enrollment is limited to a maximum of ten plus facilitator. Groups may meet as frequently as required.

When establishing counselling or treatment programs for students involved with drug-related problems, schools are advised to utilize the resources available within the local community. School officials may wish to contact addiction agencies in their communities to establish a rapport and to learn what resources are available for students referred to these agencies for help. The organizations include:

The Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency
The Commission provides comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation services throughout in Nova Scotia. These services are divided into Primary Care, After Care and Extended Care.

Primary Care includes a detoxification program for intoxicated individuals or those withdrawing from alcohol or other drugs, assessment for further treatment by the patient in consultation with a staff member, and a Treatment Orientation Program to enable the patient to continue with After Care services.

After Care includes a Residential Rehabilitation Program to help patients re-evaluate their lifestyles through client lecture series, group discussion, individual counselling, family lectures and counselling, creative and physical therapy and exposure to self-help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

Extended Care, available through the Commission's Satellite Outpatient Services, provides individual, family and group counselling. Young people are frequently seen in the Satellite Outpatient Services.

The Commission provides a range of programs for young people, educators and parents/guardians in consultation with school administrators and teachers. Some of the programs include training peer drug educators, teacher in-service and parent drug education.

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

Self-Help Groups
Self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.), Al-Anon, Alateen, and Narcotics Anonymous (N.A.) offer services for individuals experiencing drug-related difficulties and their families.

A.A. provides help for alcoholics of all ages. This is a voluntary self-help group in which recovering alcoholics provide support and encouragement for other alcoholics in the process of coming to an understanding of their problems with alcohol. Al-Anon and Alateen work with A.A.

Al-Anon provides support for the families of alcoholics who may be experiencing emotional and financial difficulties living with an alcoholic family member.

Alateen is directed towards support of the children of alcoholics and offers help for children living in alcoholic homes.

N.A. is similar to A.A. but offers help for individuals recovering from substance abuse with drugs other than alcohol.

All these self-help groups operate in various centres throughout the province and may be contacted by calling the local A.A. telephone number.

In addition, there may be individuals within the community who are qualified and able to provide drug counselling on request.

Drug Counsellors and Drug Coordinators
Drug Counsellors and Drug Education Coordinators may be called upon to talk to students in class or to talk to groups of students concerned with drug-related problems. These counsellors may be asked to provide additional drug information, to provide information on alternative activities to involvement in drugs, or to provide support for children with drug abuse in the family. They may be asked to present class lectures on a specific drug-related topic, to lead a group discussion on drug issues, or they may counsel individual students on overcoming drug-related problems.

Police Forces
Police officers are interested in promoting preventive drug education. Schools may request officers to speak to students in class or to address student groups at other pre-arranged times.

Peer Drug Educators
Peer drug educators are senior high students trained to present lessons to junior high classes on drug education and decision-making. Schools interested in this program may contact the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency.

Parent-Teacher or Home and School Associations
Educators should not forget the resources available through these groups. Some parents who are interested in the education and well being of their children may be qualified to talk about drug education; others may offer their support to the school's efforts in providing drug education and treatment programs for students in need.

Churches, Civic and Youth Groups
These groups may also oblige schools by providing speakers for classes or groups.

3.2.3 Discipline

School should not tolerate any student on school premises who is under the influence of alcohol or other non-prescribed drug, who has alcohol or a non-prescribed drug in his/her possession, or who is supplying or trafficking in alcohol or other non-prescribed drugs. School premises include all school buildings and grounds, and this policy is in force at all times. This includes during the academic day, whenever extra-curricular activities such as dances are planned, and during hours when there are no classes or activities scheduled. This school policy is also in effect for all field trips and sporting events.

In determining procedures for disciplining students in violation of the school's stated policy on alcohol and other drugs, consideration should be given to the objectives of such procedures. Disciplinary action is required when student behaviour jeopardizes the school's ability to provide the best education for its students in an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. In such cases school personnel must act to:

—Safeguard the life and health of the student (or students) being disciplined, which may involve taking an intoxicated student home and not instigating disciplinary procedures until that student returns to school in a sober state;

—Safeguard the life and health of the student body, school personnel and others using the school's facilities; and

—Safeguard the school buildings and premises.

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

Making School Policy Known

All students should be aware of the consequences of violation of the school's policy on alcohol and other drugs. Disciplinary action that follows any violation of the stated policy must be made clear to students, their parents or guardians, the teaching staff, school personnel, and any other individuals or groups who may have occasion to use the school's facilities. It is advised that the school's policy and discipline procedures be made available to students and parents/guardians in writing at the beginning of each academic year. In order to stress the importance of the school's policy and disciplinary procedures, classroom teachers should discuss these issues with students, and they should be raised with parents at the first Parent-Teacher Association or Home and School meeting of the year. Furthermore, information on school policy and procedures should be included as part of any orientation program for new students and their parents/guardians. This is particularly useful at orientation for students entering junior or senior high for the first time.

Factors in Detemining Disciplinary Procedures

In determining what disciplinary measures are to be taken in the event of violation of the school's policy on alcohol and other drugs, several points are to be considered:

— Discipline must be fair.

— Discipline must be consistent and applied equally to all students.

— Students must understand why they are being disciplined and the consequences if they do not change the behaviour or attitudes that led to the initial disciplinary action.

— Disciplinary action taken against repeated offenders, particularly against those students who violate the school's policy on alcohol and other drugs, must consider mandatory referral for assessment.

— Relevant provisions of the Education Act must be adhered to.

For discipline to be effective it should be linked to drug counselling. It should be made clear to students referred for counselling that there will be consequences if appointments with guidance counsellors, school resource teachers or psychologists, or assessment team members are not kept, or if the student fails to attend counselling or treatment sessions prescribed for him or her.

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

Steps to Consider in Introducing Disciplinary Procedures for Violation of School Policy on Alcohol and other Drugs

In determining how to apply school policy to students in violation of school rules on alcohol and other drugs, educators must first attempt to classify various offenses.

Disciplinary action must be taken in every case of students who are:
- —intoxicated.
- —under the influence of a non-prescribed drug on school property at any time.
- —found in possession of alcohol or other non-prescribed drugs on school property at any time.
- —found supplying or trafficking in alcohol or other non-prescribed drugs on school property at any time.

In each case, school policy should determine what punitive measures must be taken for first, second and subsequent offenses.

Informing Parents or Guardians

When dealing with offenses regarding the use, possession or supplying of alcohol or other drugs, it is important that the school be consistent in administering discipline and that these disciplinary measures be supported by parents/guardians. Thus, it is important that parents be informed of their son/daughter's misdemeanour after the first and any subsequent offenses. They should be informed immediately of any action the school takes and should be made aware of any further action the school may take in the event of repeated offenses.

Informing the Police

Disciplining students involved in alcohol and other drug offenses may be considered an internal matter for the school, school board, student, and parents/guardians. In certain instances the police may have to be called in to advise or assist. Whenever a student is violent or is out of his/her own control or the control of members of staff, the police should be notified.

The police should always be informed in cases involving the possession of or trafficking in illicit drugs. School disciplinary procedures should augment any punishment laid down by the courts as a result of conviction of offenses under the Narcotics Control Act. However, a school's willingness to cooperate with the courts in the provision of a Student Assistance Process for any convicted student may have a bearing on the court's decision regarding sentencing.

3.2.4 Follow Up and Re-Entry Into The School System

Students who have received counselling or rehabilitative therapy in order to learn how to control their drug use will need help in re-adjusting to the school system. For re-entry to be successful, the student will need the support of teachers and school staff, parents/guardians, and peers, as well as drug counsellors, psychologists or other professionals who may have been consulted during the rehabilitative process.

For the student who is receiving counselling after school hours, or who is attending one or more sessions a week during class time, re-entry will be part of the therapy process. However, the student who has been removed from the school, either for disciplinary or for therapeutic reasons, will find re-adjusting to school more difficult.

Those charged with helping the student during the rehabilitation process, such as the student's assessment team, must establish a plan of action suited to the needs of the particular student (in consultation with subject teachers, the guidance department and resource teachers).

As each case will be different, so each action plan will need to be modified to accommodate the student. However, the following areas of need should be addressed by those responsible for determining the best means for re-introducing the student into the regular school system:

The Student

Students who are re-entering the school system on a full-time basis should be consulted as taking responsibility for their new lifestyle becomes a part of the rehabilitative process. They need to know what is expected of them and what can be expected of teachers and peers. Certain ground rules must be laid down, particularly in the case of students who have had disciplinary problems linked to their past drug use.

Students must understand their responsibilities for missed school work. While teachers may be willing to provide extra help, it is the student who is ultimately responsible for catching up.

Students should realize that in order to change their drug habits they will have to change their lifestyles. This may involve keeping away from certain of their former peers and learning to make new friends who can have a more positive influence on them.

As a part of developing new lifestyles, students should understand the role they can play within the school community. The more involved these students become in healthy alternatives, the less likely they are to fall back on former drug habits. The emphasis should be on helping students realize they can have a positive influence on others.

Teachers
Consultation for any re-entry plan must include the student's home room teacher who may be required to assist the student to make up for missed classes.

Resource Help
Students who have been absent from class for rehabilitation purposes either for several hours per week or for one or more weeks may need to be enrolled in school resource programs to help them develop more positive attitudes toward class work and to acquire appropriate organizational and study skills for their grade level. Resource personnel should be consulted prior to the student's re-entry into the school system.

Tutoring
Additional help or special tutoring may be needed to enable these students to catch up on missed class work, assignments, or tests.

Student Support
Students experiencing personal drug-related problems will probably require the support of a new set of friends. School personnel should consider requesting the assistance of student volunteers with the maturity to help these students find alternative activities within the school environment.

The responsibility of the student volunteers is to discuss with the student and his or her student assessment team, the types of activities he or she would like to undertake and the appropriateness of these activities in the rehabilitation process.

These volunteers must be counselled to be sensitive to the student's special needs and be willing to help the student as he or she attempts to undertake alternative activities. Student volunteers should be aware that the student may be reluctant to take part in new activities and may be conscious that other students view him or her as a drug user.

The need for confidentiality is essential. It should be impressed upon these volunteers the need for discretion.

Students who have experienced drug problems in the past and have learned to overcome their problems may prove to be more sympathetic to the returning student and better able to provide introductions to new activities and new friends.

Educators should also consider establishing support groups for students troubled by drugs in their lives to meet to discuss their concerns under the guidance of a trained faciliator. There may be a need for two groups: one for students who are concerned about their own or their friends' drug use; and one for students who have a chemically-dependent family member.

Parents/Guardians
It is important that parents or guardians be consulted during the re-entry process. They should be informed of the following:

— What action is being undertaken to ease their son or daughter back into the school system;

— What is expected of their child;

— How to handle any relapses which may occur with understanding but firmness; and

— What part they can play in the re-entry process.

For a child to make a major change in lifestyle, one that no longer involves drugs, the full support of the family is important. For parents who find it difficult to be fully supportive of a child who has received rehabilitation therapy, particularly if lapses into previous drug habits occur, it may be necessary to suggest family counselling. At all times, parents should be a part of the process.

While all these efforts are important in helping the returning student re-adjust to school life, there are various other factors which must also be taken into account.

Some students may require further counselling after they have returned to school. It may be necessary to make arrangements for these students to have time off during certain periods of the day. This should be organized with the assistance of subject teachers and guidance counsellors.

Relapses are possible. Students who have responded well to counselling and who have undertaken an entirely new lifestyle with new friends may revert to a former lifestyle. This does not necessarily mean that the student cannot be helped further.

It may be necessary to restart intervention strategies and inform those concerned with the student's rehabilitation that further counselling or therapy is required. In other cases, all that may be needed is that the student be confronted and reminded of the consequences of continued drug use.

3.2.5 Tips for Educators

Teaching staff should be informed of any student in their classes who may miss school because of drug counselling or treatment sessions. They should be aware of alternative arrangements that may have to be made for students taking part in rehabilitation sessions.

The Teacher
For any counselling or rehabilitative program to be successful, the students need to feel they are being supported in their efforts. This does not mean that students should be absolved of responsibility for class work, assignments or tests missed.

The Student
Students should understand that they are responsible for all missed work, just as they would be if they were absent due to illness. Teachers may have to arrange for extra help classes if the student who has been absent is unable to complete missed assignments on his or her own.

Parents/Guardians
Parents and guardians will be concerned about their child's welfare, academic progress, and ability to re-adjust to school. Teachers may be asked to confer with parents or guardians.

There will be cases where a student voluntarily seeking help may request that parents/guardians not be notified. Such cases may include older students or students who are affected by drug abuse in the home. In these instances, consideration must be given to the right of privacy of the child over the need for the parents/guardians to be informed.

When in doubt about talking to parents or guardians, teachers are advised to talk to the person(s) involved in the student's rehabilitation, i.e. the assessment team.

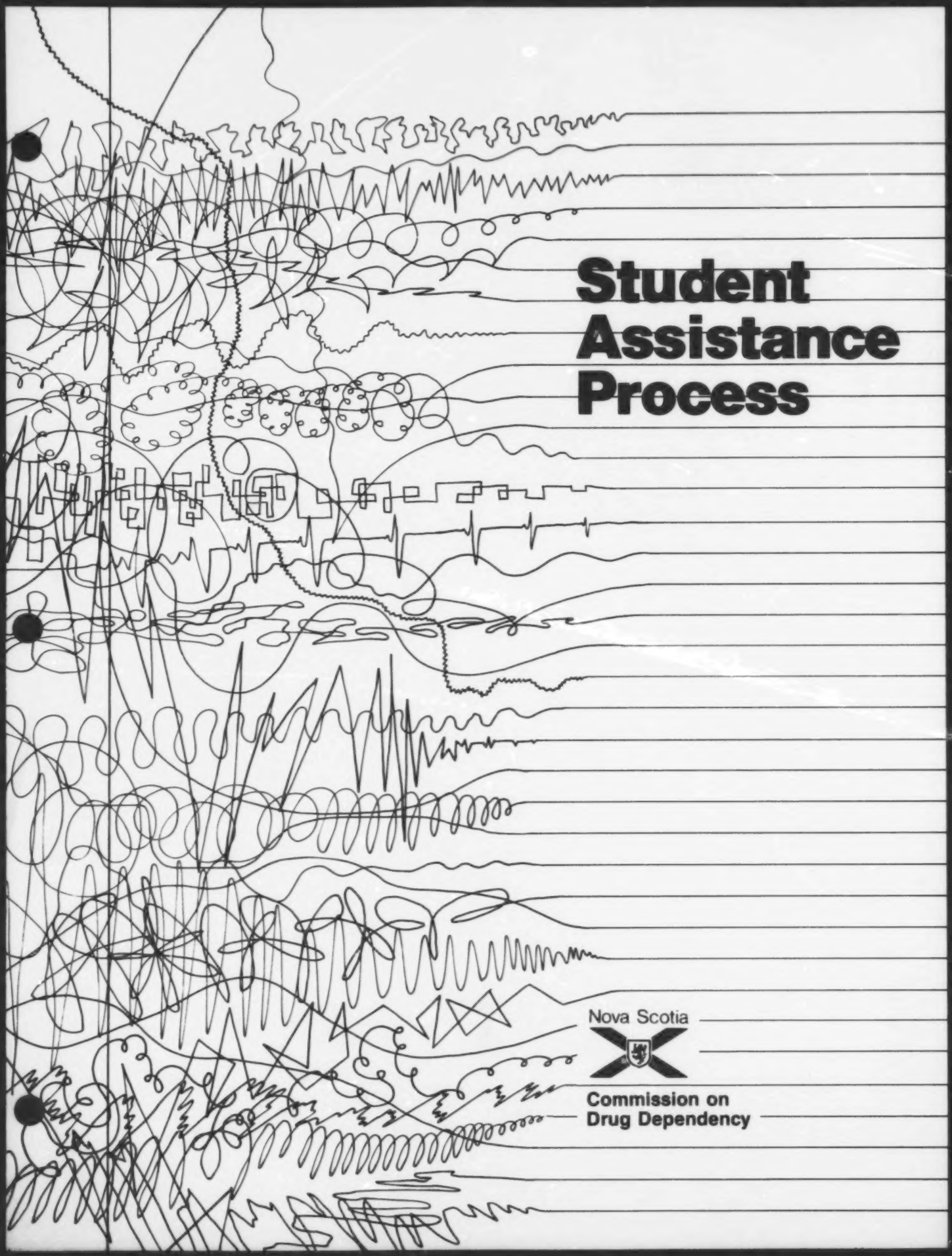
Record The Student As Absent Due To Illness
It is recommended to school boards that students excused from class to attend counselling sessions or removed from class to enter rehabilitation centres be officially registered as absent due to illness in order to protect students' rights to privacy.

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

Confidentiality

Teachers and other school personnel are cautioned that under the provisions of the Young Offenders Act the name of a minor, whether accused, convicted, or in any way connected with a criminal offense, may not be revealed to the public. This Act covers young people accused of use, possession or trafficking in alcohol or narcotics, charged by the police, or having any knowledge concerning such offenses.

It is important that school personnel involved with helping students with drug-related problems pay particular attention to the need for confidentiality not only because of legal considerations but also to earn the trust of the student. Any student involved with drugs that he or she knows to be illegal will be wary of adult advice. In order to help these students, it must be made clear to them that information about their involvement with drugs will be revealed only to those individuals with a direct interest in their case. Students should be informed of those who have been made aware of their situation from among the school administration and teaching faculty.



Student Assistance Process

Nova Scotia

Commission on
Drug Dependency

School
Drug Policy
and
Procedure
Manual

Student Assistance Process

Contents

1.0 Introduction *1*

2.0 Student Assistance Process Model *2*

2.1 The Student *2*
2.2 Assessment Team Membership *3*
2.3 Subject Teachers *6*
2.4 Community Resources *6*
2.5 Student Peers *7*

3.0 Student Assistance Options *8*

3.1 School-based Options *8*
3.2 Community-based Options *9*

4.0 Re-Entry into The School System *10*

5.0 Conclusion *11*

School Drug Policy and Procedure Manual

1.0 Introduction

The Student Assistance Process is a comprehensive service of assessment, treatment and support for students troubled by drug use. Although drug use may affect many aspects of a student's life, the focus of schools should be on intervention where drugs are having an adverse effect on the student's school work. However, student assistance may also be needed for students who repeatedly use drugs before or during a school social event, or who supply or traffic in drugs on or off school grounds.

The Student Assistance Process is adaptable to local settings and the specific needs of individual students.

Confidentiality among participating students and those teachers and administrators concerned with each case, as well as parents or guardians is important. An attitude should be fostered whereby the student feels the process is available to help him or her overcome a drug-related problem. This is particularly important in instances where students have been referred to the Student Assistance Process either by a guidance counsellor or by a school-based student assessment team as part of disciplinary procedures. Overcoming hostile feelings is an important part of any helping process.

The Student Assistance Process must also be available for students whose academic progress is being impeded by drug abuse within their homes or by close friends or relatives. These children may not be using drugs themselves but will still need help in learning to cope with drug abuse. Although most students do not begin to experiment with drugs until they are in junior or senior high school, if at all, students troubled by drug abuse in the home will be affected at a much earlier time in their lives. Schools, particularly at the elementary level, should consider introducing the Student Assistance Process for the benefit of these students.

Such students have different drug-related problems and need special consideration. They often mask problems at home, distrust help offered (in the belief they are being disloyal to their family), and may be more knowledgeable about drugs than their peers. Teachers who suspect a student is experiencing difficulties which may be related to drug abuse in the family should inform the guidance counsellor or student assessment team and ask that the student be directed to programs structured to meet his or her special needs.

2.0 Student Assistance Process Model

The prime objective of the Student Assistance Process is to assist students who need immediate help with drug related-problems caused by their own drug use or by someone close to them. The assistance process can utilize all resources and resource personnel available within the community.

2.1 The Student

The Student Assistance Process is available to all students in the school. This includes not only students referred by a student assessment team but also those who wish to refer themselves for help. While many self-referrals will be children affected by drug abuse in the home or drug use by their peers, some will be students who realize they can no longer control their drug habits without help. Therefore, school personnel should ensure that all students know:

- ☐ What processes are available in their school.
- ☐ Who to approach for help.
- ☐ The process is fully supported by the student body, teaching staff and parents/guardians, and that no stigma is attached to seeking help.
- ☐ If they are referred for assistance, whether by their request or as a mandatory referral, they will be treated with EMPATHY, RESPECT and IN CONFIDENCE.

When a student is first referred for assistance, the assessment team assigned to his or her case will be required to make some judgments about the student's problems and initiate the recovery process. The team, or an individual assigned by the team, should work together with the student and his or her family to set realistic goals and performance expectations. Involvement of parents or guardians at the start of the process will help reassure the student of family support and deter the student from using family-related excuses for failing to attain certain goals within an expected time frame.

A contract is written to include these goals and expectations set by the team assessor in consultation with the student and parents or guardians. Expectations set too high, which may occur inadvertently with a student who seems to be very co-operative, can be reset provided the student exhibits clear signs that some attempts to reach these goals are being made. Where the student is making no effort to overcome his or her difficulties, other measures may have to be taken. These measures should be made clear to the student before counselling or treatment begins.

2.2 Assessment Team Membership

The purpose of the student assessment team within the school is to help the student identify his or her problem with drugs and to refer the student to suitable counselling or treatment programs.

The tasks are to:

— Assess any student who is experiencing academic problems which may be related to drugs, either through personal use or use by a close friend or family member.

— Contact existing community resource agencies and determine what programs they offer troubled students.

— Involve the student, subject teachers (as required), and parents or guardians (if deemed appropriate) in the assessment process.

— Designate a member to discuss the proposed assistance plan with the student, explaining to him or her what changes in behaviour are expected, establish a time period during which some positive changes in behaviour are expected to be made, and establish the consequences of failure to comply. Compliance with any plan of action *must* be seen as a contract between the student and the assessment team, particularly if the student has received mandatory referral to the team. The student should be required to sign a statement to the effect that he or she understands what action is to be taken, his or her responsibilities, and the consequences of failure to comply with regulations set forth.

— Involve parents or guardians in the assistance process. Parents and guardians are an important factor in the rehabilitation of a student experiencing drug-related problems. The assessment team should determine whether a particular problem warrants a meeting with parents or guardians of a student and arrange for that meeting, preferably with the student in attendance. Parents of students whose drug use is affecting school performance may want to consider attending a support group.

There may be cases where it is not in the student's interests to contact parents/guardians, such as instances where the student no longer lives at home, fears the possibility of parental reprisals which may include physical or mental abuse, or is seeking help because of a parent's abuse of drugs. In such cases, the assessment team will need to consider the student's need for confidentiality over the parents' need to know.

When a decision has been made not to involve parents, it may be prudent to seek legal advice.

— Monitor the student's progress and make suggestions for alternative treatment or punitive measures as the need arises.

— Monitor carefully the student's re-entry into the school system, ensuring that he or she receives the support needed while maintaining the right to privacy.

— Ensure methods of helping the student re-adjust to academic studies and social life at school. Encourage the student to join new peer groups and activities that do not revolve around drugs.

— Make themselves available to consult with the student, his or her parents or guardians, teachers and professionals involved in the student's rehabilitation.

Assessment team members will vary according to school policy and resource personnel available within the community. Schools may involve the school guidance counsellor or vice principal, the resource teacher, and the school district psychologist or drug coordinator. Schools may wish to consider including some of the following professionals on assessment teams:

☐ A designated *staff member* who is trusted by students, trained to identify drug-related problems in students and able to suggest helpful counselling or treatment programs. Schools should not attempt to assign this responsibility to a particular staff position.

- ☐ A *parent representative*, presumably a volunteer from the Parent-Teacher Association or the Home and School Association who has had experience working with young people and shows an interest in assisting students with drug-related problems without prejudging them. No parent should be asked to be a member of an assessment team assigned to help his or her child.

- ☐ *Volunteers from community agencies* working with young people. These individuals may be from addiction or drug agencies, such as the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency or Alcoholics Anonymous, or they may be volunteer leaders from youth or church organizations.

- ☐ *Psychologists and drug counsellors.* It is important that assessment teams include individuals with specific knowledge of the effects of drugs on young people and who have experience working with troubled youth.

Additional community assistance could come from child psychiatrists, adults known to be trusted by the student, police officers who can advise on the criminal aspect of any child involved with drugs, or members of the legal profession who can determine not only the student's legal rights but the rights of members of the assessment team or the school.

Lists of individuals who may be consulted by assessment teams, together with their qualifications as consultants and telephone numbers, should be compiled as soon as a case is referred to the assessment team by the school.

Assessment teams should also consider the student's need for support from his or her own environment. This may include family or peer support. For example, in a case where it is inadvisable to contact parents because the problem is caused by drug abuse by a parent, it may be advantageous to include other siblings in the assistance process, particularly if the assessment team perceives that other children in the family may be affected by the problem needing to be resolved.

2.3 Subject Teachers

Subject teachers have a very important role to play in any assistance process. They will be called upon to excuse the student from class to attend counselling or therapy sessions, to record the student's absences from class, and to provide some extra time, if necessary, to help the student catch up on missed work. This makes it extremely important that all teaching staff be aware of the assistance process and the part they may be asked to play if any of their students become involved.

2.4 Community Resources

Community resources (i.e., the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency, Alcoholics Anonymous or Alateen) should be considered by the assessment team, as well as youth organizations which may offer the troubled student alternative interests in life. Finding alternative activities and joining new peer groups are important steps in learning to overcome drug problems.

Youth-oriented group leaders may be particularly helpful at a meeting of students affected by drug abuse in the family who may not have had the opportunity to become involved in activities outside the home or school. It is important that they experience the benefits of participating in community clubs, groups or sports teams.

2.5 Student Peers

The assessment team should work with the student to identify those friends who exert a positive influence. They should encourage the student to seek friends who will help rather than hinder rehabilitation; friends who maintain a more positive attitude toward healthy alternatives to drug use. Suggestions for utilizing positive peer influence in assistance programs include:

— Assigning volunteer students to provide peer support. These volunteers would be asked to befriend a troubled student assigned to them and to introduce the student to new friends and school activities. Caution should be taken to ensure that volunteers realize the need for compassion and confidentiality.

— Providing opportunities for students troubled by drugs to meet with other students with similar concerns under the guidance of a trained facilitator, i.e. support groups.

— Inviting student leaders to speak at a meeting of a student support group. Representatives from student organizations can explain to members what activities their organizations offer, how to join, and the benefits of membership. Student speakers should be invited only with the consent of all group members, and care must be taken to ensure that speakers understand the need for compassion and confidentiality.

Peers are an extremely important part of the life of a high school student. For peer support to work in the rehabilitation process, it is important that the entire student body be aware the school has an assistance process and that they can contribute to the success of the service.

3.0 Student Assistance Options

Assessment teams must, in consultation with experts in child behaviour and drug rehabilitation, consider the most appropriate therapeutic program for each case handed to them. Which type of counselling or treatment is selected will depend on the needs of the student and the facilities available within the school and the community.

3.1 School-Based Options May Include:

—Opportunities to meet with other students experiencing similar difficulty under the guidance of a trained facilitator. There may be a need for two support groups: one for students troubled by their own drug use or drug use by their friends; and one for students with a chemically- dependent family member.

—Individual or group drug counselling sessions provided by a drug coordinator or therapist.

—Informal drug education sessions where students talk with invited experts in the field of drug education about problems they or persons they care about face. Students who are concerned about peer pressure to become involved with drugs or drug use among their friends should be encouraged to attend as well. The school may wish to suggest that concerned parents attend.

—After school meetings with local police officers to discuss with students the use of drugs in their community and the need for responsible attitudes toward drug use. Such meetings can be arranged for students only, or for students and concerned parents.

—Consideration of alternative activities which students may be encouraged to join.

3.2 Community-Based Options May Include:

— Drug education or drug counselling sessions provided either after school or during school hours by drug rehabilitation clinics.

— Drug education incorporated into meetings of youth groups. Group leaders may wish to invite drug education experts or a local police officer to speak to members.

— Drug education classes for students and/or parents/ guardians, sponsored by local recreation departments or other community groups such as the YMCA/YWCA.

— Programs sponsored by groups such as the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency or self-help groups.

4.0 Re-Entry Into the School System

The importance of providing support for students re-entering the school system after short-term or prolonged absence from school for drug counselling or therapy has been discussed in this manual. However, it is important to highlight provisions for successful re-entry which include the following support systems:

Teacher Support. Teachers may be asked to provide extra time to help students re-entering the system catch up on missed assignments or work. The responsibility for making up for lost time rests with the student, but teachers may be called upon to provide assistance.

Student Support. Students re-entering the system, particularly those who have received counselling for personal drug abuse, will need the support of peers to enable them to enter new friendships and take part in new activities. In some instances, assessment teams may recommend assigning peer tutors to assist students in making up for missed class work and assignments.

Family Support. Students who have been absent from school, whether for a short or extended period of time, may also have been absent from their homes. These students require not only the support of the school, but the support of their immediate family if they are to maintain their new lifestyle. Assistance efforts should provide time for parents and students to meet with counsellors and consider ways of supporting the student and the family in the re-entry process.

Youth Groups. Involvement in youth groups provides the student who has undergone drug counselling or therapy with an opportunity to grow toward a more positive lifestyle. Youth group leaders should be encouraged to admit these students to their groups and arrangements should be made for re-entering students to learn about activities and facilities provided by these groups and how they may join.

5.0 Conclusion

A Student Assistance Process, designed around the needs of the individual student but taking into account resources provided by the school and the local community, can be effective in offering help to students whose school work is being adversely affected by drug use.

To mobilize the Student Assistance Process schools need to define the resources available before a crisis arises. Assessment teams should be assembled and ready for students to be referred by guidance counsellors, doctors or other health workers, or themselves. Resource persons should be contacted in advance to determine their willingness to be a part of the Student Assistance Process. These individuals, as well as appropriate facilities and programs, should be outlined and the list made available to assessment teams, and all teaching faculty, students, and parents or guardians.

An effective Student Assistance Process is supported by all segments of the community: students; teachers; parents or guardians; health professionals; community youth agencies; addiction foundations; and the police. The key is COOPERATION and COMMUNICATION.